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ABSTRACT

This paper provides information on working with parents of culturally different youth. Four topics are discussed: 1) general information on culturally different paretns, 2) parenting culturally different children during the preschool years, 3) parenting elementary school youth from culturally different homes, and 4) parenting culturally different adolescents. The paper delineates specific differences of various groups of parents such as Appalachian whites, blacks, Mexican Americans, Native Americans and Puerto Ricans in terms of the following: 1) family life styles, structure and family roles, 2) childrearing, 3) language patterns, and 4) interaction between educators and parents. The section of preschool years addresses the parent child interaction during the formative years and during the first three years. It also discusses infant/toddler programs for the culturally different, and home, group, and home center infant/toddler programs. Among the topics discussed in the third section are the McClain Family Strategies Model which is composed of two parts: 1) strategies parents may institute at home and 2) strategies that will strengthen the support of parents in school related activities. The last section defines the terms adolescents and sexuality. It addresses issues such as cultural influences and adolescents, parent-adolescent communication, and characteristics of adolescents. (Author/AM)

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PARENTING THE CULTURALLY DIFFERENT

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PARENTING THE CULTURALLY DIFFERENT

Introduction

For as long as educational systems have been in existence, their focus has been on the learner and the methods and materials from which he or she learns best--and that focus has been rightfully placed. What has not been emphasized enough, however, is that educators are limited in their knowledge of what methods or materials are best for the learner until more is understood about the families from which differing youth come. Culturally different learners are products of diverse ethnic groups and as such have differing backgrounds. Such backgrounds have a profound impact upon their ability to learn in the "culture of the school."

This paper will provide information on working with parents of culturally different youth. Four aspects will be presented: (1) general information on culturally different parents; (2) parenting culturally different children during the preschool years; (3) parenting elementary school youth from culturally different homes; and (4) parenting culturally different adolescents and adolescent parenting.

Although all segments of the paper are designed to impart information to educators and parents of the culturally different, the portions on parenting preschoolers, elementary youth and adolescents provide specific activities and strategies which parents may implement at home. While such activities tend to be a part of the experience in the middle class home, they are frequently missing in the homes of culturally different youth and must be purposefully structured for their parents. Qualified preschool educators, public school teachers, and university staff can and should provide the necessary leadership to structure such activities for culturally different parents.

The writers take the position that all parents should be viewed as educational resources and allies in the educational process. Middle class parents have traditionally

been viewed from this perspective: low income and/or culturally different parents, however, have not--and the price their children have paid is incalculable. It is the purpose of this paper to bring into focus the ways in which teachers can help culturally different parents help their youngsters and to thereby diminish the tragic loss of human potential.

Part I

Norma L. Spencer

CULTURALLY DIFFERENT PARENTS

Who They Are and Why They Are Different

The literature is replete with evidence that a most significant factor in effective educational programming for all learners, regardless of socioeconomic status (SES), is parental involvement. Unlike middle and upper income parents, low SES parents have traditionally been excluded from the educational processes which affect their children. Although many federally funded programs for disadvantaged learners, e.g., Head Start, Follow Through, ESEA Title I, have recently required parent participation at all levels, these programs are usually of a compensatory and/or supplemental nature and therefore do not involve regular school programs. Even with the rise of community action/control programs, low SES parents continue to be largely excluded from the decision making and implementation levels of the educational system.

Exclusion from educational programming has fallen heavily on Appalachian White, Black American, Mexican American, Native American and Puerto Rican American parents (reference groups) because these populations are disproportionately represented at the lower rungs of the SES ladder. Morrill, for example, reports that while Blacks, Native, Mexican and Puerto Rican Americans account for some 40 percent of the poor, they represent only about 13 percent of the population.[1]

However, low SES in and of itself is not the only reason reference group parents have been excluded from the educational process. What Banks describes as the real vs. expressed values in American society explains in part the dilemma of culturally

different parents. Banks suggests that while society espouses such ideals as honesty, the actions of most do not reflect the ideal.[2] Similarly, though "all men are created equal" is an expressed ideal, the evidence shows that the poor and the "different" in our society are not held in high esteem. The same may be said of the educational system with regard to inviting meaningful involvement of parents of culturally different learners. While the system frequently laments the lack of interest on the part of these parents, the reality has been that culturally different parents have not been made welcome in the schools; and indeed have been discouraged from taking part in all but PTA-Open House-Parent Day-type functions of the school.

Further, the whole concept of systematic exclusion (the deliberate or unconscious, overt or covert, legal or illegal, physical or psychological methods devised and designed by those in high positions in United States institutions with decision-making powers, to exclude the reference groups from meaningful participation in the economic, educational, social and cultural activities of the dominant society[3]) has been extremely effective in immobilizing culturally different parents in the educational process.

Exclusion from significant economic participation in our society is, of course, sufficient to prevent meaningful participation in all other areas--educational, social and cultural. Lack of participation results in lack of "operational" knowledge, which in turn places the excluded at a disadvantage, which further serves exclusion, etc.

How They Are Different

Johnson has defined culture as a way of life, a way of acting, thinking, and feeling; all that one has learned as a member of a society. He further maintains that it is not possible to consider one culture better than another, as any culture is "good" in terms of its function, i.e., a group's way of coping with its physical and social environment. Dysfunctional behavior patterns, Johnson goes on, are not likely to develop, or if they do, are soon discarded.[4]

It is important to recognize, then, that culturally different populations are at a disadvantage only when they come into contact with the dominant culture.[5]

Because schools tend to reflect, maintain, and reinforce dominant culture values[6], children of culturally different parents are at a severe disadvantage in the classroom. Reference group populations differ from the dominant society in virtually every aspect of culture: (1) family life styles, (2) child-rearing and socialization processes, (3) language patterns and usage, (4) food preferences and preparation, (5) religious practices, (6) recreational preferences and practices, and (7) styles of music and humor.

In order to maximize the positive effects of educational programming for culturally different learners, it is imperative that educators recognize that: (1) systematic exclusion has caused the reference groups to maintain a subculture which differs markedly from that of the dominant culture, (2) learners will reflect the culture from which they come, and (3) specific differences will affect learner behavior and academic achievement.

Differences That Make A Difference

While differences must in no way be viewed as inferior or synonomous with deficiencies, it is equally as important for educators to understand that differences in reference group family life styles, child rearing and socialization processes, and language patterns and usage have significant educational implications. Because these differences affect learner behavior and academic achievement, they must be acknowledged as differences that make a difference.

The following portion of the paper delineates specific differences of each reference group in the three areas listed above.

Appalachian White Parents

Although the concept of systematic exclusion has been imposed less upon them, geographic isolation (and self-imposed isolation to some degree) has excluded Appalachian families from the dominant culture. While Appalachian Whites are the only reference group not "of color", families that migrate to urban areas have been affected much the same as the other reference groups, i.e., they are at a disadvantage in

the larger society because they are culturally different.

Family life styles--structure and family roles

Reul reports that although Appalachia has no common culture, all mountain people have much in common.[7] Family structure is that of the extended family concept, with as many as three or more generations often living together. While the man is the acknowledged head of the household, the woman is said to actually make many of the decisions. At the same time, the wife is expected to love, obey and generally be submissive to her husband.[8] Roles of family members are clearly defined, including divisions of labor. An adult son, for example, may allow his mother to carry on strenuous work (even though he may be idle at the time) because that work is considered a woman's responsibility. Paradoxically however, mountain men have a genuine and fundamental respect for womanhood; and as women grow older they tend to assume the role of a matriarch and may dictate to adult sons (overruling daughters-in-law) in making family decisions.[9]

Childrearing

Childrearing practices of hill families have changed very little from past generations.[10] Reul suggests that because the life of the frontier was a harsh one, an adult-centered culture was a necessity; needs of parents had to come first. Discipline, therefore, has traditionally been handled on a short-range basis, according to the needs of the parents.[11] New babies, however, continue to be welcomed into the family and are the center of attention no matter how large the family. Parents encourage children to be emotionally dependent, loyal to family, and to conform to their wishes. At the same time, children are generally overindulged, having few rules and regulations placed upon them. Because parents realize that adult life will be difficult, children are permitted to run free to enjoy the life of the hill country while they are young. Children may be kept out of school to participate in family activities, or because the school program does not fit the family pattern.[12]

Language Patterns

Hill families generally speak a nonstandard variety of English, because of

isolation and dialectal interferences. It must be emphasized that although their language systems are nonstandard (NS), they are systematic, i.e., Nonstandard English (NSE) has its own rules of grammar.[13] Because language is learned, and because mountain parents usually speak a NS variety of English, the youth also have nonstandard patterns of usage.

Educators and parents--working together

It is essential that educators recognize how cultural differences can affect the learning of Appalachian youth in the school setting. If urban educators are aware, for example, that strong family ties and fierce loyalty to family are prized in the Appalachian hill home, they can better understand the frequent and often extended trips these families make back to their "roots". Knowledge of childrearing practices can allow school personnel to view the tendency for youth to "roam" the city as an extension of a hill country practice, rather than a symptom of parental neglect. Awareness of disciplinary techniques in the home can help educators to understand why self-discipline or discipline for discipline's sake may be more difficult to "inflict" upon Appalachian youth than upon their dominant culture counterparts. Knowledge of the systematic structure of NSE allows for employing second language learning techniques to teach standard usage, usage which is sorely needed for both academic achievement and socioeconomic mobility. At the same time, knowledge of these areas of difference permits educators to more empathetically communicate to parents that education is an invaluable commodity, and to enlist the aid of parents rather than to alienate them in this most significant enterprise of educating their youth.

Black Parents

Of the five reference groups, blacks have been the most talked-written- and studied-about. It would seem then, that because "much ado" has been made about them, the dominant society would be well and accurately informed about black families. But because much of the information has been in the same vein as the now famous (or

infamous) Moynihan Report, the larger society continues to harbor gross misconceptions about black family life.

Family lifestyles--structure and family roles

Like the Appalachian family, black family structure is marked by strong kinship bonds and the extended family concept.[14] In addition, however, black family structure also includes the augmented family concept, i.e., unrelated persons such as roomers, boarders or other relatively long-term guests.[15] Unlike Appalachian families, however, black family roles are extremely flexible. Black family members are expected to adapt their role and function to meet family needs. This flexibility, Hill maintains, has been a strength and source of stability of black families.[16] Finally, and contrary to the preponderance of literature, black families tend to be equalitarian in structure rather than matriarchal.[17]

Childrearing

Socialization presents a double challenge for black parents as they must teach their young not only how to be human, but how to be black in a white society. Youth must be taught to accept themselves, while distinguishing themselves from whites; and perhaps most important to their survival they must be taught how to deal with white people.[18] While youth are taught to be self-reliant, independent and to take care of younger siblings, disciplinary techniques tend to be authoritarian in nature and marked by the use of many nonverbal communication cues.

Language patterns

NSE is spoken by many black parents, particularly low SES families. As is true of Appalachian youth, black youth will tend to exhibit the same language patterns as their parents. Because of the confusion surrounding what has been termed "Black English", it is necessary here to make a distinction between NSE and slang. The terms are not synonomous. NSE refers to language structure (grammar, phonology, syntax). Slang or "street talk" is largely concerned with vocabulary--assigning different meanings to otherwise established word meanings, e.g., bad=good. Because black youth are likely to speak NSE and also use a number of slang terms in their

speech, this is an important distinction.

Educators and parents--working together

Teachers of black youth often complain about tardiness and excessive absence. Many operant control-type programs have been initiated to help extinguish these behaviors. The flexibility of roles demanded by black families (often as a survival response) most assuredly must be a significant factor in selecting any such programs aimed at the children. To repudiate the behavior of youth who must be responsible for maintenance of a household or care of siblings is at best insensitive--at worst--inhumane and abusive.

For those educators who would lament the time and effort spent in attempting to effectively discipline black youth, they would do well to be aware of the disciplinary methods most effectively used by black parents.

The need for black youth to become bidialectal cannot be overemphasized. Traditional methods of teaching SE to NS speakers have failed miserably, as evidenced by the staggering number of black youth who leave school unable to speak and write SE. Therefore, the recommendations for teaching SE to Appalachian youth apply here as well.

It is incumbent upon educators then, to communicate to black parents how the above mentioned differences affect learning. Knowledge of cultural differences and reasons for the differences should help to equip educators with the sensitivity and understanding required to help parents to help their children.

Mexican American Parents

Mexican Americans are the second largest ethnic minority in the United States. Census figures reveal a population of approximately 6.7 million.[19] Other estimates are 10 million or more. There is considerable controversy concerning the term that best describes Americans of Mexican descent. Mexican American, Chicano, Spanish surname population, and Americans of Mexican descent are among the terms used (Mexican American and Chicano being most used) to describe this reference group whose heritage is primarily Indian and Spanish. Penalosa has suggested that there is no such "thing" as a Mexican American culture, nor is there a Mexican American community

because the group is socially, culturally, ideologically and organizationally fragmented. There are also social-class, regional and rural-urban differences within the group.[20] However, there seems to be ample evidence that differences in family life, childrearing, and certainly language are characteristic enough to have significant educational implications and therefore, merit discussion.

Family life styles--structure and family roles

Both the extended and the patriarchal family concept characterize the structure of the traditional Mexican American family. Other characteristics attributed to the traditional family are clearly defined male-female roles and strong family and ethnic kinship bonds. Garcia has cited Aragon concerning the concept of nepotism being a positive and functional value among Mexican Americans because of their feeling that no one can be trusted more than loved ones.[21]

Childrearing

In the traditional Mexican American family youth have been taught to be noncompetitive and nonaggressive. Submission to and respect for adults is expected, particularly where the father is concerned. He is the authority and youth must defer to his decisions.[22] Boys are taught to be fearless, brave and masculine, while girls are expected to be passive and are sheltered in the home.[23]

Language patterns

The literature indicates that a major area of concern for Mexican American youth is language. Bilingual/bicultural education is recommended by the preponderance of writers. Youth whose home language is not English make up the largest failure group in the American educational system. Yet it was not until 1968 when ESEA Title VII was amended to include the Bilingual Education Act that national attention was focused on the need for bilingual education.[24]

Educators and parents--working together

Knowledge of (1) the circumstances under which Mexicans became American citizens under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, (2) ensuing events that have led to their present circumstances, (3) diversity and differences within group, (4) traditional

values, and (5) bilingual/bicultural education must certainly be included in the educational repertoire of every teacher of Mexican American youth. Armed with this knowledge educators will be better able to understand the extremely difficult conditions under which many Mexican Americans are forced to function. This knowledge should also help educators to establish a working relationship with parents that is devoid of the holier-than-thou and/or patronizing syndrome presently representative of many educator attitudes.

Native American Parents

Native Americans are perhaps the most diverse of the reference groups, yet the most unique.[25] Traditionally, Native Americans more than any of the reference groups have had at least one common goal--to remain Indian; there has been little desire to assimilate. They have not wanted to melt into the pot and come out culturally white. Estimates of Native American populations are over 600,000 consisting of more than 300 tribal groups. To speak of Native Americans as a homogeneous group is at best inaccurate. An "Indian" philosophy or way of life then, is difficult to characterize.[26] However, there are a substantial number of shared values among tribes.

Family life styles and childrearing

Although family life styles play a major role in determining childrearing practices in all families, for the Native American the two appear to be inextricably bound and therefore are included as one in this section.

The extended family or clan has fostered a strong sense of community, generosity, sharing, interpersonal harmony and strong personal relationships among Native Americans. The community protects the individual; this is the basis of tribal life. The Native American is said to live within himself but not for himself.[27] The spiritual aspect of Native American life is more than merely a religious orientation. They maintain a harmony-with-nature relationship in virtually every aspect of life.[28]

Youth then raised in a traditional Native American society may be expected to reflect in part, the following values: (1) tolerance for individual differences, (2) equalitarian (rather than competitive) relationships, (3) lack of interest in

"imperialistic" ventures, and (6) lack of interest in technology that offers no significant improvement in the quality of life, or that threatens basic values.[29]

Language patterns

Anthropologists have attempted, with great difficulty, to categorize the more than 2000 Native American languages into six major families.[30] It follows then, that Indian education administered by the dominant society must include bilingual/bicultural education appropriate to individual Native American populations.

Educators and parents--working together

Because of the apparent "irreconcilable differences" between Native American and Anglo American value systems, it would seem that Native American youth run the greatest risk of being dehumanized by the American educational system. Fortunately, however, it appears that those very differences have been the salvation of Native Americans--their value system will not allow them to become dehumanized.

It seems inconceivable that anyone would be permitted to "teach" Native American youth without (1) knowledge of Native American values in general, (2) tribal values and language in particular, and (3) positive attitudes concerning those values. The concept of a culturally pluralistic society demands nothing less. Native American parents have traditionally had different goals for themselves and for their children than have Anglos and/or the other reference groups. It would seem then, that Native American parents must dictate educational policy rather than to be told by the system what is "best" for their youth.

Puerto Rican Parents

The Jones Act of 1917 granted American citizenship to Puerto Ricans. Theirs is said to be the first airborne migration in American history. Indian, African and Spanish are the three major groups from which Puerto Rican heritage is derived.[31] In 1973 the mainland Puerto Rican population was estimated at 1.55 million.[32] While the largest concentration of Puerto Ricans on the mainland is in New York City, other concentrations are found in Chicago, Cleveland and Lorain, Ohio, and San Francisco.

Family life styles--structure and family roles

Puerto Rican families have experienced numerous adjustment problems upon migration. The extended family and strong kinship bonds have been significantly weakened on the mainland. Perhaps the most serious conflict has come with the shift in roles of husband and wife. Economic conditions in the states have made it necessary for many Puerto Rican wives to work outside the home, and often it is easier for women than for men to find employment. Thus the role of the husband and father as undisputed head of the household has been seriously challenged.[33]

Childrearing

The changing role of Puerto Rican youth has been equally disconcerting to migrating Puerto Rican parents. While American children are taught to be self-reliant, aggressive, competitive, etc. (which traditional Puerto Rican parents consider disrespectful), Puerto Rican youth are generally more submissive. Parents cannot understand it when Puerto Rican youth begin to behave in the same manner as American youth. Perhaps the most severe problem of control has been with girls. Unmarried girls in Puerto Rico are closely chaperoned and protected. This, of course, is much more difficult on the mainland. The resulting tension between parents and daughters is an extremely traumatic experience for parents.[34]

Language patterns

A major problem caused by language differences in Puerto Rican families is that often the youth have a better command of English than their parents, and may assume the role of spokespersons for the family with those in the outside world. This is a major shift in roles traditionally assigned to Puerto Rican children by their parents--to be seen--and heard.[35] Paradoxically, special education classes for the mentally retarded are "overpopulated" by Puerto Rican youth, with language as a major factor in placement. Ability grouping and tracking of Puerto Rican youth are also widespread and too often lead to permanent placement in these classes, again based heavily on language. Bilingual/bicultural education for Puerto Rican as well as for Mexican American youth is such an obvious need. That, perhaps, is the reason that many

school systems with substantial numbers of Spanish speaking youth have failed to judiciously implement meaningful and effective programming.

An adjustment problem of importance equal to any of the others mentioned previously is that of color. A severe identity crisis has been created for migrating families because island relationships based on color are not the same as on the mainland. Class relationship rather than color tends to be the determinant of treatment in Puerto Rico. Thus, an upper class white Puerto Rican would tend to behave toward a lower class white Puerto Rican in the same manner as he or she would behave toward a colored Puerto Rican of the lower class.[36] In the states, color is more often the determinant of treatment, regardless of class.

Educators and parents--working together

The above mentioned adjustment problems for migrating families are sufficient misery. Insensitive educators who lack knowledge of the conflict between island and mainland values are an added misery. Those who would condemn financially insecure families who seize every opportunity to return to the emotionally secure confines of the island could have no notion of the binding kinship and extended family ties that for many families cannot be unwound. A positive sense of identity is important to all in our society; to minority youth, it is crucial. Knowledge of island and mainland color classification systems then, is crucial to teachers of Puerto Rican youth. Knowledgeable, sensitive, humanistic educators would lessen the need for Puerto Rican youth to act as spokespersons for their parents with the schools; for parents would surely feel more at ease in attempts to communicate with such educators.

Conclusion

It is doubtful that Zangwill had any notion of the lasting impact his 1908 four-act play was to have upon American society. For nearly 90 years hence although the society is unquestionably multicultural, his melting pot is still on the back burner of the societal range. While America espouses a commitment to cultural pluralism, there are those (educators among them) who continue to light the fire

under the pot at every opportunity.

Because the concept of cultural pluralism is not yet a reality, the masses of the reference groups discussed in this paper have been unable to sit down to America's table to enjoy a complete meal. The result has been that millions of American citizens are malnourished, socioeconomically, educationally and humanely; and malnourishment, of course, invariably takes its heaviest toll on the young. The suggestions and activities recommended in the following sections of the paper offer nutritive value for culturally different parents and their children. The dessert can only be a healthier American society.

PART II

Sheila R. Berry

THE PRESCHOOL YEARS

The Formative Years: Birth to Six

Within the past decade multidisciplinary research has focused extensively on the subject of early learning. The intelligence of infants and young children has been investigated in the fields of neurology, physiology, psychology, biology, and education. As a result the collective data have provided a wealth of information and insight into what and when the very young can learn. Studies on the biology of the mind conducted by neurophysiologists and cognitive psychologists have revealed that the optimum time for many kinds of learning and for stimulation of basic learning is the formative years, i.e., the first six years of life. Consequently, Beck reports several important early learning theories that have emerged from similar research from other disciplines.[1] These theories have serious educational implications for the formative years. They are:

1. A child does not have a fixed intelligence or predetermined rate of intellectual growth, contrary to past beliefs. The level of intelligence can be changed--increased

or decreased--by the environment and especially during the earliest years of life.

2. Every child experiences sensitive periods for specific kinds of learning. These periods are stages in a child's development when the physiological state of the growing brain makes certain kinds of learning most easy to acquire. After these periods have passed it is difficult, if not impossible, to acquire these kinds of learning.

3. A child has already developed half of his total adult intellectual capacity by age four, and 80 percent by age eight. Thereafter, regardless of the kind of schooling or environment he experiences, his mental abilities can only be altered by about 20 percent.

While the early learning theories cited above support the importance of the formative years, many research studies give particular attention to the first three years of life[2]. Although the Educational Policies Commission regards the first five years of life as the period of most rapid physical and mental growth, they emphasize that the first three years are probably even more crucial than the fourth or fifth year.[3] If the compiled research is to be seriously considered, then the role of the parent becomes a crucial factor in influencing the child's early learning - particularly in the child's first three years of life.

The First Three Years: Parent and Child

The emphasis research has placed on early learning in the first three years of life necessitates two major departures from traditional education, i.e., changes must occur in (1) the instructor and (2) the educational site. Generally speaking, then, the instructor for a child under age three must shift from the traditional teacher to the "new" teacher--the parent. Further, the site of learning and development must shift from the traditional school to the new "school"--the home. If learning is to be maximized for the very young child at home, then it is absolutely essential that the parent(s) have the time and skills necessary to provide for the child's total development, i.e., the child's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs.

Moreover, the parents must see to it that the home environment has the characteristics conducive for learning. These characteristics must include an attractive, orderly stimulating environment, i.e., one that provides the necessary learning and developmental media such as toys, books, records, puzzles, swings, etc. In addition the home atmosphere must be quiescent, cheerful and clean.

The need for adequate parenting skills and a proper home environment during the child's first three years of development cannot be overstated. An intensive research study conducted in the homes of preschoolers and their mothers revealed that the mother was the single most important influence on her child's early learning capacity.[4] The research of Gordon, Painter, and White also stress the important relationship of the parent(s) and home environment during the child's first three years to future learning and development.[5]

In view of these findings the writer feels that two factors are essential to assure important parenting skills and a good home environment. These factors are: (1) education and (2) economics. If the parent is severely lacking in either of these areas then the child's learning and development may be seriously handicapped at birth. In such instances then the writer feels that it is imperative that every community provide a home based parent/child development program for needy families to enable their children and themselves to have the same opportunities afforded those persons in the larger society.

Infant/Toddler Programs for the Culturally Different

Rationale

In the early 1960s, following the aftermath of Sputnik I, the American educational system underwent a critical transitional period with the hope of maximizing the learning potential of all. During this period of national assessment educators discovered that a relationship existed between failing students and economically deprived families.[6] In order to prevent future learning difficulties among this population, a preschool program, Head Start, was designed and implemented nationally in

1965. Unfortunately, however, program evaluations demonstrated only minimal gains. It became apparent, therefore, that developmental and learning programs were needed before age three if children of poverty were to be helped educationally. Subsequently, research focused on early learning programs that encompassed the first three years of life. Findings revealed that: (1) the first three years of life are the most important for future learning[7] and (2) the role of the environment, i.e., family and home, tremendously influences a child's future performance.[8] Based on these findings various types of home intervention and/or center based infant/toddler education programs came into existence, primarily to assist the culturally different population.

Organization and Structure

Whether an infant/toddler program is home based and/or center based a commonality in organization exists among quality programs for the culturally different. The writer feels that two primary goals are the hallmark of quality programs: (1) total child development, and (2) parental involvement. Beyond these two major goals, effective programs "build-in" several components to meet the needs of the reference group families. Each program reflects:

1. a staff training program that emphasizes (a) the lifestyle of the culturally different, and (b) total parent/child development.

2. a curriculum tailored to the developmental needs of the culturally different.

3. a lending library that circulates the teaching media to families that cannot afford developmental aids (toys, records, books, periodicals, etc.)

4. a feeding program that provides needy families with infant formula to prevent malnutrition and possible mental retardation.

5. transportation and child care services to enable parents to attend parent sessions.

6. field trips to broaden the parent's and child's knowledge beyond the immediate neighborhood.

7. extended services to both parent and child, i.e., educational, recreational, health, psychological, and social services in order to make total development of

economically depressed families a reality.

In addition to the components cited above, effective program implementation requires (1) adequate staffing patterns, (2) adequate instructor/child ratio, and (3) an effective daily schedule.

For culturally different children less than age three there are three basic types of infant/toddler programs that share the same organizational components but vary in structure. They are: (1) home infant/toddler programs, (2) group infant/toddler programs, and (3) home-center infant/toddler programs.

Home Infant/Toddler Programs

Parent/Child Development

A home based infant/toddler program for the culturally different helps to compensate for the parent's educational and economic deficits. Therefore, it is imperative that this type of program have a dual thrust -- total parent development as well as total child development.

In the home based program the parent has a double role, that of teacher and learner. Consequently, as the child's first teacher it is essential that the parent understand the four aspects of development (physical, intellectual, emotional and social) and how each is developed through each activity on the child's lesson plan. Through the parent and child's daily usage of the lesson plan the two major goals of the program are brought together - parental involvement and total child development. Thus, the lesson plan serves as the foundation of a quality home based infant/toddler program.

If the parent is to be an effective model for the child it is important that the parent, as learner, be programmed for intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally. Classes that stress academic and intellectual improvement must be offered for the parents. Recreational and social outlets must be provided through parent/child recreational programs. Finally, the parent's positive self concept must be encouraged through participation in classes, lectures, television and radio appearances, program demonstrations, etc., made available through the program. Through

total self improvement the parent also becomes more employable and able to advance economically.

As the parent becomes a more proficient teacher and advances economically, the child's developmental experiences will broaden. Depending on the child's age the child's lessons will include: (1) sensory stimulation, (2) developing body skills, (3) language, (4) self awareness, (5) concept training, (6) problem solving and (7) imagination. Depending on the parent's income the child will be exposed to more educational and enriching experiences through travel, books, recreation, etc.

Structure

The structure of a home based infant/toddler program designed to serve the needs of the reference group families will vary with the size of the population served. A recommended staffing pattern for a program serving 100 families includes: (1) program director, (2) curriculum specialist, (3) administrative assistant, (4) home instructors, (5) custodian, and (6) consultants, i.e., nurse, psychologist, and social worker. It is suggested that the instructor/family ratio be maintained at one home instructor per ten families (maximum) with each family being visited three times a week throughout the year. Hence, schedules must be arranged so that no more than six families are visited daily. Duration of visits must be adapted to the child's stage of development. Therefore, the following schedule is recommended: (1) newborn to 6 months, 15-30 minutes; (2) 6 to 12 months, 30-45 minutes; (3) 1 to 3 years, 45 minutes to one hour.

Group Infant/Toddler Program

Structure

A group infant/toddler program for the culturally different embraces the same organization and goals as a home based program but varies in structure due to its central operation. When programming for an enrollment of thirty children which includes infants, toddlers and preschoolers, the following staffing pattern is recommended: (1) director, (2) associate director, (3) pediatric nurse, (4) nursery school teacher, (5) infant/toddler instructors, (6) teaching assistants, (7) cook, (8) custodian, and (9) receptionist/bookkeeper.

Although federal guidelines outline specific staff/child ratios, state guidelines vary. Therefore, the writer suggests that with children under age 18 months, the staff/child ratio be maintained at one staff person per four children. Between 18 months and 3 years of age, the staff/child ratio recommended is one staff person per five children.

Facilities for a group of infant/toddler/preschoolers and staff necessitates a minimum of three playrooms, two baths, a kitchen, office space and a parent/teacher conference lounge. Since children from birth to three experience a wide range of developmental stages, they must be divided according to (1) schedules, (2) specific needs and (3) development. Consequently, a group program must be highly individualized for the very young child (under age 2) and is more structured for children of nursery school age (between ages 2 and 3).

Home Center Infant/Toddler Program

Structure

Presenting a different structure, the home-center infant/toddler program combines both the home and group approach of infant/toddler programs. Beginning in the home this type of program works with both the parent and the child from birth until age two. Thereafter, the child enrolls in a center based program and continues until school age. Parental participation is on-going until the child enrolls in kindergarten. Staffing patterns and instructor/child ratios remain the same as the home based and group type programs.

Practical Application

Since learning and development begin at birth, an infant/toddler program forms the foundation for future learning and development that is needed in the school years. Thus, a natural linkage exists between infant/toddler programs, preschool programs, and elementary school. Many parents fail to understand this important linkage and ask, "What can a baby learn?" and "Why is it important?"

An infant/toddler program encompasses a multitude of learning and developmental

experiences in preparing a child for later learning. Among these experiences reading is an essential part of the child's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development. It is also one of the most important skills needed for future learning and communication. Accordingly the writer has developed a model for parents to use indicating the sequential evolvement of three skills needed in the reading process: (1) language, (2) visual discrimination, and (3) auditory discrimination. In using the early reading readiness model, the parent begins at birth and proceeds with the activities until age three, progressing from the concrete (familiar) world of the baby to the abstract.

Language

Beginning at birth, the parent supplies the infant with language by talking, singing, and reading, to the child. When talking, parents should always identify objects by naming them for the child, e.g., "rattle", "bell", etc. A constant supply of words (1) helps the baby understand his world long before he can talk, and (2) gives the child a vocabulary with which to express himself when he is able to talk. This vocabulary will later be recognized and understood as the child learns to read these same familiar words.

In addition to supplying the infant with numerous words, at approximately four months the parent can give the baby gestures to imitate, since the child will be able to imitate gestures before imitating words. Later, the parent can imitate the baby's sounds, thus encouraging the child to reproduce vocalizations that will be used later in talking. It is important that the parent always continue talking, singing, and reading as the child grows. Depending on the child's progress, between ages two and three the parent can provide the phonetic sounds of letters through play. Phonetic sounds of letters can also be taught through television programs such as Sesame Street.

Visual discrimination

Constant exposure to the parents' face from birth enables the baby to soon discriminate the parents' facial features, i.e., the shape of their eyes, nose and mouths. When the infant is approximately one month old parents can give the baby

other objects to observe, such as a variety of bright patterns to differentiate. Toys can be added later for more discriminatory activities. A mirror enables a six month old child to identify the specific shape of his own facial features, i.e., eyes, nose, mouth, teeth. Through exposure to other people the child will soon learn to visually discriminate himself, familiar and unfamiliar faces.

As the child grows parents can provide additional toys of differing shapes and sizes that the child can distinguish both visually and through touch, e.g., rattle, bell, etc. Household objects can also increase visual skills, e.g., recognition of the differences between a knife, fork and spoon. A one-year-old can use a simple form board to put three shapes (circle, square, triangle) into their proper place. Form boxes of varying difficulty will allow the child an opportunity for more careful discrimination. Between ages two and three the child can be introduced to puzzles, and finally to letters of the alphabet. Each letter should be identified by its name and visual appearance, thus combining language skills with visual discrimination.

Auditory discrimination

At birth the parent can use voice variations to teach the baby sound discrimination through talking, singing, humming, whistling, whispering, etc. Exposing the child to the voices of other people teaches another form of sound discrimination. Later, voices on television, radio, etc., can be used as well as those in person.

Within the next few months the baby can listen to sounds that are not vocal, e.g., music, toys, such as rattles, bells, etc. At approximately six months of age household objects and indoor and outdoor sounds can be introduced. Listening to sounds with wide variations can continue until age two. Between ages two and three the child can be given specific sounds to identify that are both different and similar. Sound bottles can be made to teach this type of auditory discrimination.[9] Finally, the parent can combine language, visual and auditory discrimination to teach the child phonics or as suggested earlier the child can learn phonics from children's educational television programs.

Berry's Early Reading Readiness Model: A Play Based Technique

Language	Visual Discrimination	Auditory Discrimination	Integrating
Talking	Face - Mother Father Other family members	Voice variation Talking Singing Humming Whistling Coughing Laughing Sneezing Whispering	Concrete: * Name Shape Sound Bell Rings Rattle Rattles Abstract: Name Shape Sound K (kay) K Kuh M (Em) M M-m-m * Through play child realizes that objects have specific names, shapes and sounds. Through transfer of knowledge child realizes letters have specific names, shapes and sounds. Integration of this knowledge helps child learn basic skills needed to read.
Singing			
Reading			
Imitating gestures	Facial features Eyes, nose, mouth teeth		
Imitating baby's sounds	Patterns Stripes, concentric circles	Voice discrimination Mother Father Others Television Radio	
One syllable	People - facial features		
Two syllable	Toys Crib mobile Rattle Bell Mirror Baby shapes	Sound discrimination Vocal Music: vocal instruments	
Words			
Sentences			
Specific phonetic sounds	Household objects Bottle Knife Spoon Fork Plate Cup	Toys Rattle Bell Music box Clock Crib toys Squeak toys	
	Clothing Shoes Socks Comb Brush Toothbrush	Household objects Indoor Clock Footsteps Doorbell Water Door Watch Typewriter Outdoor Cars Dogs and cats Birds Crickets Rain Wind Train	
	Form Box	Sound bottles	
	Puzzles	Phonics	
	Letters of alphabet		

Integrating language, auditory and visual discrimination

As the child progresses from infancy to age three the parent can provide numerous opportunities to teach the child early reading skills through play based techniques. If the parent has consistently used language, visual and auditory discrimination through repeated play activities the child realizes that many objects have names, shapes, and sounds. For example, one object is designated as a bell. The bell also has a specific shape and sound. Another object is called a rattle and has a specific shape and sound. Through play the child transfers this knowledge to letters, realizing that each has a different name, shape, and sound. As the child integrates this information he is learning specific skills that he will need in learning to read.

PART III

Shirla R. McClain

THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL YEARS

Self-Concepts of Culturally Different Parents and Children

If infant/toddler stimulation programs become more widespread and preschool education extends that early experiential base, then culturally different youth will be better prepared for the elementary school experiences. Realistically, however, the number of infant/toddler programs in existence are grossly insufficient, and sizeable numbers of culturally different youth do not yet attend preschool programs. Consequently there are a multitude of culturally different parents who are not yet involved in the education of their children prior to the elementary school years.

Because during their training, teachers have had little or no required course work in educating culturally different youth they find themselves unable to make any meaningful impact on the home. Teachers oriented in middle class values do not understand that reference group parents want the same for their children as parents of the dominant society: a quality education.

Cuban has indicated that poor parents--and disproportionate numbers of culturally

different parents are poor-- (italics mine) have high aspirations for their youth. They want their children to learn how to read, write and compute. He suggests, however, that skeptics might question why parents don't carry through on their aspirations if they value education and its rewards. To answer that question, Cuban cites The Child Rearing Study of Low Income Families which concluded that the poor lack sufficient money, knowledge, and contacts to help their youngsters realize desired educational goals. Moreover, Cuban states, "If home and school clash, it is not over the value of education. The answer lies elsewhere."[1]

It is the opinion of this writer that a part of the answer lies in the fact that teachers have not been adequately trained in helping reference group parents to: (1) better understand themselves; (2) understand their children; and (3) understand their role in the educational process. Thus, if teachers who educate culturally different youth are to become more effective in the classroom, it is important that they understand, assist, and reach culturally different parents.

One of the areas of prime concern to teachers should be that of helping to develop a positive self-concept both in the learner and their parents, for the reference group youth may come from a home where the family members have learned to have negative self-concepts. Johnson addresses the problem of poor self-concept of disadvantaged youth and suggests that a child who: 1) grows up in a family that has inherited poverty; 2) lives in circumstances that induce failure; and 3) experiences rejection by society will develop a low self-concept. Furthermore, his negative attitude toward self is constantly reinforced and when his negative self-concept is unchanged, he in turn produces children who develop poor self-concepts. Poor self-concept becomes yet another cycle of poverty for the disadvantaged and many such youth never begin the cycle of achievement.[2]

The danger of a learner accepting a low self-image is that the problem becomes a cyclic, self-fulling one in school wherein poor self-concept produces academic failure which in turn heightens poor self-concept. Simply stated, children who expect to fail frequently do fail--and as Johnson states, "this only reinforces

feelings of inadequacy."[3]

The problem is further magnified because many youth from culturally different homes have parents who have experienced similar academic failure and therefore hold negative beliefs about their own worth as well as the worth of their children. In addition to holding such low self-evaluations many culturally different parents, although willing to help, do not know how to help their children academically. Levine has suggested that parents who have not themselves enjoyed the rewards of an affluent society may not understand how to help their youngsters prepare for the demands of school. They may instead communicate values which cause the child to be hostile or ambivalent about values encountered in school.[4]

The challenge to educators is thereby compounded, for they must be able to convince both parents and children that one can be culturally different and still be academically successful--an understanding of which many educators themselves are not yet convinced. It follows then, that if educators are to help parents build positive images of self-worth, which the parents can convey in turn to their children, then educators--either in conference with parents or in parent workshops--must outline for culturally different parents specific activities in which they can engage. Such activities would be structured to improve parents' and children's self concepts and to strengthen family cohesiveness. The following segment delineates those activities.

The McClain Family Strategies Model

The model consists of two parts: (1) strategies parents may institute at home and (2) strategies that will strengthen the support of parents in school related activities.

Implementing Strategies at Home

The suggested strategies are designed to enhance the self-concept of low income culturally different families. They are structured with limited family income in mind. All of the activities may be conducted concurrently or parents may select the ones in which they wish to participate.

The family box

A strategy parents may implement with minimal effort or money is to develop a family box. Parents would place in it such items as: (1) pictures of their children from birth to present; (2) locks of hair from the boys' first haircuts; (3) notes that the children have written to their parents; (4) pictures which the children have drawn; (5) items children have made in preschool classes; (6) tape recordings of children's voices at various stages of their lives; etc.

Periodically parents would open the family box and discuss its contents with their children. Such discussions would allow children to realize the significance of what they have contributed and to gain an awareness that the reasons for their parents valuing such "keepsakes" are because they, the children, are loved by and important to their parents. Sharing such moments should develop the self-concept of both parents and children as they grow in mutual admiration and respect for each other.

The family scrapbook

An alternative to developing the family box would be compiling a family scrapbook. A scrapbook is limited in that it could not contain large items such as those that might be placed in a family box. However, it has the advantage of being more easily organized. Contents of the family scrapbook might include: (1) photographs of family members participating in a family activity; (2) certificates or ribbons that the children have earned; (3) newspaper clippings about the family or its individual members; (4) birthday and other special occasion cards given to parents by their children and vice versa; (5) souvenir postcards from trips or excursions; (6) pressed flowers from special occasions, etc.

The scrapbook could be used as a conversation piece which siblings and/or parents discuss periodically in order to share and recapture precious moments. Parents could emphasize to their youngsters how important each child is and explain something about the contents of the scrapbook that relates specifically to a given child. Moreover, using newspaper clippings as motivation, parents could encourage each child to enter a variety of local newspaper contests and to set high aspirations.

Such a family activity, again, would enhance the self-concept of both parents and children because it: (1) permits each family member to realize the contributions they have made to the family; (2) encourages togetherness among family members; and (3) develops a reciprocity of respect for each member.

Devoted dialogue

In many culturally different homes family ties are very strong and family loyalties abound. Nonverbal cues have traditionally been an effective means of expressing strong feelings of kinship and love. However, it is important that verbal communication occur, not only to enlarge vocabularies (which will contribute to academic achievement) but also to verbally reassure children of their worth.

One way in which parents of reference group youth can enhance their children's self-images is for the parents to tell each child, periodically and privately, how different--how sadly different the parents' lives would be without him or her.

It is imperative that each child realize his own value, his own potential in comparison with himself or herself, rather than in comparison to his or her siblings. Therefore, it is important that parents recognize that they should not attempt to treat all of their children alike; rather that they must relate to each child differently, for no two are the same. What is critical then, is that parents treat their children equally fair in terms of each child's differing needs.

Family night

In order to perpetuate the culture of the home and to foster family cohesiveness and pride, at least one night per month would be devoted to the entire family's participation in "family night." This activity would involve the parents and siblings engaging in a purposeful type of recreation or leisure.

One recommended activity would be a storytelling hour during which either or both parents: (1) pass along some of their family history, i.e., explain the family tree to the children, or (2) relate to the children some aspects of their cultural backgrounds. Children could learn about: (1) the kind of church that the parents attended as youngsters; (2) special foods that grandparents cooked on special occasions;

(3) the kinds of schools parents attended; (4) the teachers whom the parents remember best and why; (5) the games parents played as children; etc.

"Family night" could be as simple as (1) parents playing games with their youngsters; (2) watching and discussing a television program together; (3) popping popcorn or cooking a treat; etc. More elaborate activities might include (1) eating at a restaurant on a special occasion (or a fast-food type restaurant if finances dictate); (2) attending a special sports event; (3) going to a family movie, etc. There are a wide range of possibilities, but the main consideration would be to allow children to have a pleasant time with their parents--relaxed, unhurried, and sharing leisure time together. Consequently, each member of the family would grow in understanding his importance as a member of a team--the family team.

Although it is recommended that "family night" be held once per month, the needs and styles of each family would dictate the frequency of such meetings. Regardless of frequency, it is important to remember that "family night" should be a regularly scheduled, meaningful activity. Otherwise, it will have lost its purpose.

Individual conferences

In addition to "family night", parents could hold individual conferences with each child. Conferences should be scheduled at a time convenient to the family members. However, suggested lengths for conferences would vary from fifteen to thirty minutes, once per week. Conferences should be as flexible or structured as the needs of the family demand.

During the conference each child would be free to express to his or her parents anything he or she wishes, and vice versa. Although it is preferable that the child confer with both parents, he or she could elect to confer with either. The individual conference atmosphere should help both parents and children to develop more positive self-concepts since the conference setting would be one conducive to expressing love, acceptance, and feelings of special worth.

School Related Strategies for Parents

Emphasis in the previous segment has been on how reference group parents can

employ various strategies at home to foster positive self-concepts in themselves and their children. This portion of the paper will offer recommendations for culturally different parents that will enable them to function more effectively in their school-related supportive role while continuing to instill positive self-images in their children.

Extending school into the home

Before culturally different parents can be effectively involved in their children's educations, they must be made to feel welcome at school and they must become acquainted with the school's purpose, philosophy and curriculum.

One of the purposes of schools serving a predominant number of reference group youth should be to assist parents in meeting educational objectives. This is not to say that culturally different parents are to supplant teachers. However, through instituting family strategies, reference group parents can enhance their supportive role; supplement their children's knowledge; and incorporate the educational goals of the school. For example, if a school supports a philosophy of minimizing class competition and maximizing self-competition, educators can encourage parents to emphasize self-competition at home. Such activities as the individual conference, instituting a family box, or beginning a family scrapbook, lend themselves well to a child's understanding of self-competition; i.e., a child can realize his personal contributions, progress, and development in line with his potential.

It is this writer's opinion that class competition can have severe drawbacks in all school settings, but is particularly dehumanizing to learners who are at a disadvantage because of their cultural backgrounds. In addressing the harmful effects of competition in American schools, Campbell notes that one child's failure makes it possible for another to succeed; that one child's depression is the price of another's exhilaration; that one child's misery is the occasion for another's rejoicing. He comments further that this is the standard condition of the American elementary school, but to a Native American such performance would seem cruel beyond belief, for competition--the wringing of success from somebody's failure--is a form

of torture foreign to those noncompetitive Americans.[5]

Culturally different children, in particular, need to measure themselves by a yardstick that fits their life style--one which permits them to maximize their potentials and to experience a self-fulfilling series of successes before being forced to compete with the more advantaged youth in the dominant society. Using some of the suggested family strategies as a vehicle for discussions with reference group youth, parents would be able to help them understand that self-competition can prepare them to meet the more stringent competition which will be encountered at school and in the larger society.

In regard to the curriculum, parents should become familiar with the subject areas and their contents in order to assist their children in meeting educational objectives through reinforcement at home. For example, schools which have endorsed a multiethnic curriculum similar to that proposed by the National Council for the Social Studies guidelines[6], and schools which have adopted teaching strategies such as those delineated by Banks[7], could familiarize parents with their programs of instruction. Culturally different parents, capitalizing on such content and materials, could help educators meet their goals by extending the students' learnings into "family night" activities, individual conference discussions, or through contributions (poems, illustrations, creative stories) to the family scrapbook.

Banks' stories, valuing activities, materials and resources constitute a valuable source of information for family discussions of many ethnic groups and as such has unlimited potential for maximizing family strategies. For example, a discussion of the diverse ethnic groups should not only enhance the self-concept of parents and students, but should also broaden family perspectives of and heighten respect for others who are culturally different or have a different ethnic background. Moreover, schools instituting multiethnic curriculums can effectively develop positive self-images in culturally different parents and their youngsters if educators use parents as resources to supplement their instruction.

Individual conferences at various academic stages

Although the individual conference should be a time for children and parents to express a variety of concerns, it can be used effectively to share topics that are related to school. Parents should keep in mind that the conferences should always be meaningful, not perfunctory. To hold a conference for conference's sake sacrifices its intent. Consideration of a child's academic level may provide parents with some direction for the conference; suggested academic levels and topics for discussion follow.

Kindergarten children

Frequently in culturally different homes, children are called by nicknames or initials and enter school never recognizing their formal name or those of their siblings or parents. Thus, parents of children entering kindergarten may want to take the conference time as an opportunity to teach their youngster his or her full name--first, middle, and last; his siblings' real names; and the formal names of his or her parents. Furthermore, the child can be taught other pertinent information about himself such as: (1) his complete address, (2) his birthday (and/or birthdate), and (3) his phone number. Parents should make it a point to teach their children new addresses and phone numbers in the event that they move during the year.

All of the aforementioned items are significant in making the child cognizant of the fact that he or she is "somebody" of importance, that he or she is a very special part of a special group of people in his life--his family.

Primary youngsters

In conference with children in the primary grades, parents can let their youngsters know how important they are by listening to them read or by reading to them. In such a setting emphasis must be upon making the conference a pleasurable one with children as the focus of attention rather than making it an instructional environment with an emphasis upon teaching.

Elementary youth

Since culturally different children, like those of the dominant society, are sent to school to learn, many reference group parents do not see their role in enhancing

that learning. Consequently, these parents must be made aware of the supportive role they can play in the education of their children and must be taught to verbally express an interest in the academic progress of the children in school.

Parents may wish to use the individual conference period to discuss with each child what he or she has learned in school during the week. Frequently, the answer is a shrug, a negative shaking of the head, or a simple verbal comment, "Nothing." Nevertheless, parents must continue to question their youngsters, for such verbally communicated concern lets reference group youth know that their parents have expectations of them. This parental expectation may engender a feeling in the youngsters that "school really is important."

Conferencing with teachers

Beyond the interest in school that parents demonstrate during the individual conferences with their children, parents can also confer with teachers at school. Parents should make every effort to know their children's teachers' names and the grade level of each of their children. Such knowledge also lets the culturally different child know that his or her parents think that both he/she and school are important.

If at all possible, conferences between parents and teachers should be scheduled early in the school year and parents should seek to determine four things:

1. Their child's ability and performance level, i.e., Does the child have below average, average, or above average ability? Does he work slowly, at an average rate, or quickly? Does he progress in spurts?

2. The curriculum content of a given grade level, i.e., What should the child know at various stages of the year and at the year's end in each subject area?

3. The meaning of the grading system, i.e., How should the parents interpret daily grades as well as those on the report card?

4. The ways in which parents can help to implant good study habits and skills in their children, i.e., Should there be a special time for homework? Should there be a designated place to do homework? What are parental responsibilities regarding homework?

Culturally Different Parents as Decision Makers

The success of family strategies to develop self-concept at home and school related strategies to strengthen parents' supportive role in the educational process will be largely dependent upon the school's attitude toward culturally different parents.

Heretofore, reference group parents have had little opportunity to share in making decisions about the education of their children. Thus, they have been unskilled in integrating school experiences with family practices that would reinforce cognitive and/or affective learnings. Although their children need desperately to build on a foundation of academic successes that will foster positive self-identities, culturally different parents will continue to be of little assistance to their children until they are responsibly involved in making school related decisions.

What is necessary, then, is for educators to recognize the need for increased parental involvement in the decision making process. Hedges and Martinello have suggested that the school must not only recognize the reality of the need for more parental involvement in decision making, but also to view it as desirable. In noting the school's traditional position in regard to working with parents, they have stated that schools have tended to keep parents at arm's length and in a submissive posture. But if schools can come to understand that when the decision making process is shared, the responsibilities for the results are also shared, then perhaps some of the school's defensiveness could be overcome.[8]

Educators must enlighten themselves and not only enlist parental support, but also engage parents in making responsible decisions about the education of their young. For as Karlin and Berger have indicated, "Parents should never cease to be (our) staunchest allies."[9]

PART IV

Patricia M. Stewart

THE ADOLESCENT YEARS

Selection and Clarification of Terms

The importance of self-concept emphasized in Part III of this paper continues to be an important consideration for educators who work with culturally different adolescents and their parents. As this segment of the paper will point out, the way in which parents feel about themselves and their adolescent children will have an effect upon their mutual communication.

Before examining the topic of parenting adolescents and adolescent parents in the reference group families, it is important to clarify the selection of two terms which will be used throughout this segment of the paper: (1) adolescents and (2) sexuality.

While the term adolescent and teenager are generally used interchangeably, it is this writer's opinion that the term teenager evokes a prejudicial stereotype that labels a group of human beings within an age category. Therefore, many of the persons between the ages of twelve and twenty-one are viewed as a category, depriving them of personhood and individuality.

In place of personhood, the teenage person in our society is given an identity associated with some undesirable group characteristic. As a result, the relationship between society and teenage persons often resembles the conflictual interaction between any persons that is based on prejudice. Since it is the purpose of this segment of the paper to focus on potential positive changes in behavior, the first change must be in the use of terminology. Teenagers are to be referred to as adolescents.

The second term, sexuality, is used in this paper to mean how a person behaves in terms of being male or female. The term sexuality (sex) often conjures up a variety of perceptions based on the extent of the person's factual, fictional, and fantasy experiences. This orientation to sexual behavior reflects differences that

are attitudinal as well as semantic. In order to clarify the use of the term, this writer interprets sexuality to mean the thoughts, feelings and actions that a human being has in regard to being male or female and as such the term is much broader than physical sexuality. Specifically, it is the sexual development of the human being that encompasses the physical, social, intellectual and emotional development. Sexual development manifests itself then in all four aspects of sexual behavior.

Characteristics of Adolescence

Chronologically an adolescent is a person between the ages of twelve and twenty-one. Developmentally, the adolescent stage evolves through four continuous periods. Although there is disagreement among writers as to the ages in which these periods occur, most agree on the continuity. The four periods are: (1) preadolescence, (2) early adolescence, (3) middle adolescence, and (4) late adolescence.[1]

During the entire adolescence stage, biological and psychological changes occur within individuals that are both typical and atypical for that period of development. An example of the range of typical/atypical development is the twelve-year-old who becomes a biological parent while psychologically his or her emotional and social development precludes that ability to adequately parent an infant.

Early adolescence appears to be the stressful period for parents as well as for adolescents. The period is marked by (1) an increase in sexual impulses; (2) a changing body image; and (3) a redefining of peer group relationships by males and females.[2]

The media, i.e., television, popular literature and newspapers bombard society with an abundance of information and accounts in regard to sexual activity. Yet in spite of the deluge of media reports, American parents seem to view the emergence of biological sexual maturity of their offspring with a naievete of the Victorian era. Although primary sexual characteristics are evident through overt physical changes, the occurrence of secondary sexual characteristics associated with reproduction often create an uneasy parental awareness of sexuality. The parental/family reaction

varies from positive acceptance of achieving another milestone in life to secretive encounter and/or conversations between parent and adolescents or among adolescents.[3]

Although most parents tend to be primarily concerned with adolescent sexuality other areas of concern produce sufficient stress to merit mention here as topics for parent-adolescent communication. They are the adolescent's (1) desire for peer group acceptance; (2) need to demonstrate independence; and (3) indecisiveness about present and future life plans. Moreover, Cohen has observed that adolescents have the tendency toward being self-centered, i.e., they are preoccupied with themselves--their feelings, ideas, and plans.[4]

Cultural Influences and Adolescents

Socialization Processes

The concept of sexuality is an important one for all members of society, but cultural influences have particular implications for the sexuality of the culturally different. Socializing reference group youth in terms of their culturally defined sex roles was addressed by Spencer in Part I of this paper. In addition, Johnson has indicated that the division of labor in American Indians' cultures is often strictly defined by sex and causes cultural clash when violated. Similarly, coed dancing or other student activities that conflict with tribal or cultural taboos are a source of cultural clash.[5]

The clear definition of sex role functioning is an important aspect of the socialization processes that influence adolescent behavior. If the successful negotiation of the demands of adolescent-parent relationships is to be realized, however, it is necessary to have established an attitude toward an acceptance of the entire realm of sexuality on the part of both parent and adolescent.

Two factors which greatly influence this acceptance are: (1) the degree to which family members demonstrate affection between each other, and (2) the accuracy of biological knowledge possessed by parents.[6]

Demonstrative affection is a manifestation of psycho-social and psychosexual

development. If human beings early in life develop a relationship based on the ability to display tenderness and concern through kissing, touching and endearing talk then their social identity as adequate group members is enhanced. It follows that the psychological strengths acquired through early social interactions will serve to promote the development of a positive self concept.

Reul has indicated that in Appalachian families the baby is the center of attention and parents and older siblings spend long hours playing with the infant. This adoration may end abruptly, however, with the advent of the next child who then becomes the main focus of attention.[7]

Similarly, black families bestow the greatest amount of attention on the baby who is held and cuddled by all members of the family. Holding close and kissing is a common evidence of affection. Fathers or older brothers will kiss a child without embarrassment.[8]

The foregoing information suggests that although affection is overtly demonstrated in both the dominant society and in culturally different families, the degree of demonstrative affection changes early in the homes of the reference group families. The support of the family frequently shifts to the youngest family member and siblings may misinterpret this shifting of outward affection. Thus, the development of positive self-concept may be stifled early in the life of a culturally different child and accordingly, by adolescence his or her feelings of self worth have diminished.

The accuracy of biological knowledge possessed by parents may be dependent upon cultural views regarding sex. Biologic knowledge may be highly inaccurate if a child is socialized in a home where: (1) superstition is associated with sex, (2) a parent has relied upon heresay instead of factual information, (3) the knowledge presented has been misconstrued, or (4) parents, although knowledgeable of accurate information, deny this information to their children.

Early Parenthood and Childrearing Practices

While it is important to remember that all youth are more alike than different, it is essential to recognize that the implications of being culturally different

(as delineated in Part I of this paper) have caused reference group adolescents and their parents areas of stress in addition to those already outlined. One of the most serious of these areas is that of the high risk of becoming an unwed adolescent parent. However, this must in no way be construed as a cultural trait, but rather as consequences of systematic exclusion.

Statistics in regard to adolescent pregnancies, for society at large, depict a societal problem of utmost seriousness. In ten years, 1962-1972, the first births to fifteen to twenty year old girls increased by approximately 80,000. The number of births to women under fifteen increased by about 40 percent from 1962-1968 and continues to be the only adolescent period in which the birth rate is increasing.[9] Although 60 percent of the first births to fifteen to twenty year old females in 1972 were to married couples, the marriages were jeopardized by pressure to marry and the ages of the adolescents.

Although a disproportionate number of early marriages and/or adolescent pregnancies have occurred among reference group members, recent population statistics indicate that in the category of young teens, the percent of change in teenage birthrates of nonwhites is decreasing.[10]

While many culturally different adolescents marry and begin families early, there remain a large number of unwed parents in the reference group families. Much attention has been given to the unwed mother, but unmarried fathers have not been sufficiently recognized. Pannor, Evans, and Massarek have noted that although unmarried fathers have been around as long as unmarried mothers, it is generally assumed that women alone are unmarried parents by some magical disassociation of male participation and responsibility.[11]

Research findings indicate that the unmarried father is available for casework and that expectations should relay to the father that he is an important part of the total picture. Seeing other unmarried fathers helps an unmarried father to clarify his need for help as a person and ultimately affects the total parent relationship.[12]

A number of programs for adolescent mothers have been established. Although

their intent has been to provide ongoing academic experiences as well as education for parenting, conflicts have occurred concerning teaching the "right" way to rear children. Nelson indicates that controversy has focused on the extent to which programmers had a right to interfere with childrearing practices which reflected cultural differences. It was felt that a young mother could not gain feelings of self worth and competency if the program stressed values which were in conflict with the mother's cultural milieu.[13]

The adolescent years are challenging ones to parents as the foregoing sections of this segment have revealed. The challenges to the culturally different parent--and educators who work with the reference group families--are those which call for innovative techniques to diminish some of the stresses involved in parenting the adolescent and adolescent parenthood. The following portion of this segment of the paper outlines specific strategies for educators to implement with culturally different parents.

The Stewart Model for Parent-Adolescent Communication[14]

Reference groups have intricate communication systems for conveying meanings to one another. However, the communication is less direct and less verbally explicit than may be found in majority culture. There is a reliance on music, dance, posture and nonverbal communication that uses eyes and gestures to convey implicit messages.

Therefore, to bring communication to a conscious level whereby there will be mutual translations and interpretations, a different communication model is recommended. The Stewart Model: (1) provides an alternative to the existing communication system, (2) allows opportunity to examine actions and feelings in a more structured manner, and (3) heightens perceptions of human needs and responsibilities. Its use is intended to create more positive relationships between culturally different parents and their adolescents.

Self Examination Strategy

Improving the adolescent-parent relationship is basically dependent on the (1) family communication system (2) treatment of adolescents that dignifies their existence, and (3) parents' ability to accept their own sexuality. A breakdown in communication often results during adolescence because of parental prying or probing techniques and the adolescents' resistance to parents as authority figures. It is difficult to alleviate the problem at the adolescence stage if the severity of conflict reflects a longstanding relationship. For families experiencing such problems, help may have to come from professional sources.

However, for families who have established some lines of communication, changes in individual behavior may result in a number of changes within the family. A primary change would be implementing a communication system which is non-directive yet allows parents to examine the feelings they have about themselves and their adolescents.

Before the model can be implemented properly it must be thoroughly understood by educators who would train parents in its use. Educators who are concerned about and committed to effecting positive changes in reference group parents and their adolescents would structure at least three training sessions for parents. A description of the sessions follows.

Session One

Educators would distribute a copy of the self-examination instrument to parents. It is a paper and pencil activity that allows parents to be successful without having to be subjected to an evaluative process by an authority figure.

Self examination instrument

1. What things do I do that as a mother/father type show that I am either one or the other of the following items?

    a. a windmill or a steam engine

    b. a Cadillac or a Volkswagen

    c. a two dollar bill or a money order

d. a tape deck (Cassette) or an LP record

e. a dust mop or an electrobroom

f. a fairy tale or a true story

g. a lovesong or a march

2. What are the characteristics of each that you can relate to human characteristics? Which do you see in yourself? Are the characteristics physical, social, emotional or intellectual?

Educators administering the self examination would give the parents these directions:

1. Think about each item carefully. Think about how it looks and how it is used.

2. What are the characteristics of each item that you can relate to a human characteristic? i.e., some may see a windmill as sturdy, strong, plain, simple, etc. (The person administering this self examination must emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers.)

3. Circle one of each pair of answers that you think is most like you.

4. Following completion of the series of items, members of the group would volunteer to tell the behaviors they viewed as characteristic of each item. The administrator would encourage the parents to give responses and would record their responses. Such a procedure allows parents to share, in a dignified manner, those characteristics which they associate with themselves.

5. After the group has shared their responses the administrator explains that the next procedure is to chart five of the characteristics which the parent viewed himself as being most like. Each parent would take his chart home and focus on one characteristic per day to determine what he did with the family that day to reflect the given characteristic. For example, a parent might see himself as sturdy, enduring, efficient, factual, and romantic based upon his perceptions of a windmill, an LP record, an electrobroom, a true story, and a love song, i.e. items, respectively. On Monday he would write down what he did in relation to his family to indicate he was sturdy. On Tuesday he would indicate what he did in regard to the family to

reflect endurance, etc.

In addition to recording his interactions with the family in terms of the characteristics the parent perceives in himself or herself, the parent would also code the characteristic with a plus (+) or minus (-) to reveal how he felt about being sturdy, enduring, efficient, etc.

Session Two

When the parents meet with the leader for the second session, they discuss the feelings that emerged as they employed the self-examination instrument. If more time needs to be devoted to a parent to work through the process more effectively, he/she should be given another session using different items. It should be mentioned here that the self examination instrument can be composed of inanimate objects that are within the cultural background of the parents, i.e., a black parent might relate better to an item which asked, "Are you more like an afrocomb or a hot comb?"

If parents do not need additional time to understand or become proficient at using the instrument, then in Session Two they could look at the same list and indicate how they viewed themselves as an adolescent from twelve to fifteen; fifteen to eighteen; or eighteen to twenty-one. They should identify which age group on which they are reporting. Such information tends to make parents more conscious of the feelings of adolescents.

Session Three

The third time that parents use the instrument (with the same items) they are no longer evaluating themselves, rather they employ it to evaluate one of their adolescent children.

Upon completion of the third session, the parents would take copies of the instrument home for their adolescent children to use for self examination purposes. This could be done as a family activity or individually.

After going through the full cycle of evaluating, parents might record what they have found out about themselves. Once parents and adolescents have heightened their perceptions of themselves then there exists a basis of communication and parents can

assert authority more effectively.

An Alternate Self Report Strategy

An alternate approach to self report or self awareness is to express feelings that are generated in relation to a particular event or time--feelings that have been difficult to express about an anticipated or past event.

Since the refrigerator in a home can be used as a focal point for reminders, school work papers, and notes, it can also serve to open up communication and demonstrative expressions between family members.

As a sounding board, the refrigerator becomes the intermediary for persons whose fragility will not allow them to be directly confrontive. Several types of written communication for this purpose are: (1) a feelings face with name, time and what happened to stimulate that feeling; (2) a thank you face for some action or reaction specifically involving the parent and another member of the family. (The thank you face can be used for something as concrete as taking out trash or for something as abstract as a big smile on the child's face, reflecting self satisfaction at something done well, i.e., the parent thanks the children for smiling);(3) a magazine picture which shows someone doing something that the parent or adolescent would like to do.

Conversation at dinner time can lead to a discussion of how persons' feelings are related to behavior and what kind of feelings are used consistently in making decisions. When parents can reveal to their adolescents that all behavior reflects physical, social, emotional and intellectual factors, the fears and uncertainties that adolescents feel about this stage of their development can be put into proper perspective.

Adolescents need to be understood and to be involved with others in supportive relationships. As communication barriers are removed, the more serious nature of communication involves the parental acceptance of their adolescent's need to grow by testing limits of behavior and by experimentation.

The right to fulfill these needs is often denied by society and parents in punitive and restrictive actions which severely limit the adolescent's maturation process.

If parents and adolescents can work together to arrive at their rights: (1) to be a part of a group, (2) to take a risk, and (3) to enhance the self concept, then it follows that both have responsibilities associated with these rights.

Conclusion

The natural or aging process of the adolescent proceeds undisturbed by the ravages of time. The maturation or nurturing process is blunted or enhanced by the experiences which adolescents have with peers and significant others over time. Nature and nurture combine to convey to individuals a sense of who they are.

In conclusion, the writer presents Combs' thoughts to encourage all efforts to enable adolescents to become mature adults. People learn who they are by the manner in which they have been treated while growing up. If a person learns success, acceptance and love from being treated as though he or she were successful, accepted and lovable, then he/she is more likely to have positive thoughts about himself/herself.

The challenge to the people in the helping services is to provide individuals, parents and adolescents with experiences that teach them they are positive people. But first, we must be purposeful and positive, giving dignity to ourselves and those we help.[16]

EPILOGUE

Shirla R. McClain

The culturally different parent has probably been more misunderstood than the culturally different child--possibly because more is expected from adults than from children. What educators and members of the greater society tend to forget, however, is that the culturally different parent--having a history of disadvantage--has had a longer time to grow "more like himself."

Those in society who have had the greater advantages and promises of a better life need to be ever mindful of the needs of those for whom life has been nothing more than <u>inherited</u> poverty and repeated failures. Changes in the lives of the culturally different <u>can</u> occur if only the dominant culture becomes cognizant of,

concerned about, and committed to using their advantages to offset the disadvantages of those less fortunate.

Perhaps that change can gain momentum if the nation's educators become a nation of empathizers who can put "blaming the victim" to rest and take direction from an anonymous poet's words which reflect upon the plight of culturally different parents:

> If I could only see the road you came,
> With all the jagged rocks and crooked ways,
> I might more kindly think of your misstep
> And only praise.
>
> If I could know the heartaches you have felt,
> The longing for the things that never came,
> I would not misconstrue your erring then--
> Nor ever blame.[1] (emphasis added)

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